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121 was the investigation of the upper part of the course of the Missouri, they do not form a prominent feature, and it is impossible to expect, from a few months' residence, an opinion on the social condition and character of that motley population.

The indulgent reader, following the author beyond the frontier of the United States, will have to direct his attention to those extensive plains—those cheerless, desolate prairies, the western boundary of which is formed by the snow-covered chain of the Rocky Mountains, or the Oregon, where many tribes of the aborigines still enjoy a peaceful abode; while their brethren in the eastern part of the continent are supplanted, extirpated, degenerated, in the face of the constantly increasing immigration, or have been forced across the Mississippi, where they have for the most part perished.

122 The vast tracts of the interior of North-western America are, in general, but little known, and the government of the United States may be justly reproached for not having done more to explore them. Some few scientific expeditions, among which the two under Major Long produced the most satisfactory results for natural history, though on a limited scale, were set on foot by the government; and it is only under its protection that a thorough investigation of those extensive wildernesses, especially in the Rocky Mountains, can be undertaken. Even Major Long's expeditions are but poorly furnished with respect to natural history, for a faithful and vivid picture of those countries, and their original inhabitants, can never be placed before the eye without the aid of a fine portfolio of plates by the hand of a skilful artist.

In my description of the voyage up the Missouri, I have endeavoured to avail myself of the assistance of an able draughtsman, the want of which I so sensibly felt in my former travels in South America. On the present occasion I was accompanied by Mr. Bodmer, who has represented the Indian nations with great truth, and correct delineation of their characteristic features. His drawings will prove an important addition to our knowledge of this race of men, to whom so little attention has hitherto been paid.

121 After mature consideration, I have judged it desirable to throw the account of my voyage on the Missouri itself into the form of a journal, as the daily notices were numerous, but the 128 variety very trifling; so that the patience of the reader will unfortunately be tried a little in this part of the narrative. In those uninhabited, desert countries the traveller has nothing but the description of the naked banks of the river, and the little diversity they afford, interrupted at times by the adventures of the chase, and occasional meetings with Indians; the reader will therefore excuse many observations and unimportant descriptions, which would have been omitted if the materials had been richer in variety. I need still more indulgence with respect to many observations on natural history, but for this the loss of the greater part of my collections will be a sufficient excuse. The cases containing them were delivered to the Company, to be put on board the steamer for St. Louis, but not insured; and, when the steamer caught fire, the people thought rather of saving the goods than my cases, the contents of which were, probably, not considered to be of much value, and so they were all burnt. This may be a warning to future travellers not to neglect to insure such collections.

Though the main object of my journey, namely, to pass some time in the chain of the Rocky Mountains, was defeated by unfavourable circumstances, I should have been able, but for the loss of my collections, to communicate many new observations, especially in the department of zoology, which are now more or less deficient. The accounts of the tribes of the aborigines, and